

Opening Statement of Chairman John Tanner  
Joint Hearing of the Subcommittee on Social Security, Committee on Ways and Means,  
and the Subcommittee on Economic Development, Public Buildings, and Emergency  
Management, Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure  
December 15, 2009

Today's joint oversight hearing is intended to provide a status report on the effort to replace the Social Security Administration's (SSA's) National Computer Center (NCC), which is the largest and one of the most critical construction projects funded by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009.

This is the second oversight hearing the Subcommittee on Social Security has held concerning this project, which will improve SSA's ability to efficiently serve 56 million beneficiaries and 150 million working Americans.

We are joined today by our colleagues from the Transportation and Infrastructure Subcommittee on Economic Development, Public Buildings, and Emergency Management, who have jurisdiction over the General Services Administration. We welcome Chairwoman Holmes Norton and thank her for her continued interest and insight.

Congress recognized that replacing the existing NCC had become an urgent matter and provided adequate funding to SSA to begin that process as quickly as possible. At the same time, our responsibility to the taxpayer as well as our obligations as stewards of Social Security require transparency and fiscal soundness in every decision being made to replace the NCC.

Early next year, the decision on a preferred location for the new data center will be made. We wanted to take the opportunity before this year ends to receive an update from the agencies about the progress and decisions made to date.

I understand that even prior to the Recovery Act, SSA had decided that a new data center would need to be located away from its headquarters campus. But the rationale for this decision was not entirely clear until this Subcommittee requested and received just recently an independent and thorough analysis from GSA of the feasibility of building on the campus. I expect GSA to explain some of this analysis today.

The Subcommittee is also concerned about the gap between the time when the existing NCC is expected to run out of capacity, and when the new data center is projected to be completed. I understand SSA expects that the new, secondary data center built in North Carolina can help carry the load and fill this gap. We are eager to learn more about this expectation.

I thank Mr. Johnson, our colleagues and the witnesses for participating in this hearing at this very busy time of the session.